

Series: It's a Seussical Life: Discovering Creative Ways to Live as God's Kids

Sermon #1: The Cat In the Hat Knows a Lot about That

Books: *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (1937) & *The Cat in the Hat*

Scripture: Isaiah 1:15-20, Psalm 103:1-13

Text: Psalm 103:12 "As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us."

Sermon Blurb: This Sunday we start our fall series, "It's a Seussical Life: Discovering Creative Ways to Live as God's Kids!" Dr. Seuss's Cat in the Hat makes a good first impression: all he wants to do is have fun, but that fun leads to all kinds of messes and trouble. We're kind of like this, wanting to pursue what seems right and fun to us, but discovering that when we live this way, our lives end up in a mess! Come this Sunday to see how God cleans up our messes and gives us a new start. It's time for a *clean* start!

Gathering Song: "Great Are You, Lord" -Sanctify

Welcome: Pastor David

Worship Set: -Sanctify

"Nothing but the Blood"

"Beautiful Things"

"Jesus Paid It All"

Worship prayer

Book Reading: "Cat in the Hat" - Andrew

Juggler - Lon

Kids to Kid's Church

Prayers: Pastor David

Commissioning of Scott Van Daalen

Offering: "Clean" -Sanctify

Message: "The Cat in the Hat"

PP#1: *Image of Geisel and some of his characters.*

Dr. Theodore Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, is one of the most beloved children's book authors and illustrators of all time! His popularity continues because his books are not just fun to read or take us to silly, wacky, and imaginary places, but because if you take a second look at the stories, there's a message there for kids of all ages. Some argue that Dr. Seuss is actually quite a theologian!

So this fall, we're going to take a look at some of Seuss' stories to help us understand what it means to be a Christian, and what the Bible teaches us about being a Jesus-follower. It works, you see, because actually we are all kids, not just kids at heart, but we are actually God's children. So, we're going to read Dr. Seuss to help us learn how we can live creatively as God's kids.

"It's a Seussical Life! Living Seussically as God's Kids."

PP#2: *Image of Mulberry Street & Giesel with a book.*

But before we engage today's story, let's step back a moment and learn something from Dr. Seuss' *life* first. Did you know that he had a very difficult time even finding a publisher for his

first book? While on a steamboat cruise, the cadence of the engine put a rhythm in his head that made him think in rhymes. So he worked and worked on his first story, both he and his wife pouring over each word, each line, over and over again. As the story emerged, the signature line got stuck in his head, “And to think that I saw it on Mullberry Street!” Can you hear the pulsing boat engine?

It’s a playful story about a boy who, on his way home from school, uses his imagination to make what he sees much more exciting.

Well, this was back in 1937, and Theodore Geisel took his story and sketches to different publishers around New York. Yet over and over, the publishers told him “no.” First five, then ten publishers told him “no.” But he kept trying, and trying. Then fifteen, then 20, then 25! Can you imagine Geisel, door after door, slamming in his face? What would you do?

I would have given up long before then! But he kept trying, and trying. Hmm. Let’s see if I can do this: “He kept trying, and trying, and trying some more. Kept knocking and knocking on every new door!”

Well, as Geisel told the story, he was walking home along Madison Avenue, stinging from the book's twenty-seventh rejection, with the manuscript and drawings for *Mulberry Street* under his arm. He happened to bump into Mike McClintock, an acquaintance from his student days at Dartmouth College. Mike asked what Geisel was carrying. “That’s a book no one will publish,” Geisel lamented, “I’m lugging it home to burn.”

Now, Mike had just that morning been made editor of children's books at Vanguard Press. He invited Geisel up to his office later that afternoon, and that very day Vanguard bought the story.

Since then, they’ve published over 600 million of Seuss’ books worldwide! Even now, 25 years after his death (d.1991), 4 million of his books are sold every year! That’s 11,000 every single day! Can you imagine how all those other 27 publishers must have kicked themselves? Years later, Geisel reflected on that coincidental sidewalk encounter—something we Christians describe as God’s providence—saying, “If I’d been going down the other side of Madison Avenue, I’d be in the dry-cleaning business today.”

PP#3: The Cat In the Hat Knows a Lot about That

1. Keep trying, and trying, and trying some more!

“Do not get tired of doing good, because in time we’ll have a harvest if we don’t give up.”

-Galatians 6:9

Well, here’s our first learning today: sometimes God calls His kids to be tenacious! Closed doors don’t necessarily mean that God is telling you “no.” Sometimes it means that God is telling you to keep trying. God conditions His kids—trains us—to develop stamina, character, and perseverance. We don’t really grow when things always come easily. One of the lessons that we need to hear, over and over again as God’s kids, is that we must not give up! Galatians 6:9, “Do not grow weary of doing good, because we know that at the right time, we’ll have a harvest if we don’t give up.” Besides, “trying and trying and trying some more” is so good for our faith development! Romans 5:3 says, “We even take joy in our problems, because we know that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” See, when we are well-toned Christians, we have the fortitude to go the distance, to keep on keeping on, even in the face of obstacles. We’ve learned how to put our trust in God, and we’re not so easily undone when things are difficult. We are determined to see things through...27 times, and even one more!

PP#4: It's a Seussical Life! Living Seussically as God's Kids.

Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot about That

Psalm 103:12 "As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us."

Well, today we begin with one of Dr. Seuss' most iconic characters: The Cat in the Hat. We heard the story while the kids were still in here. There's also a sequel, *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*, and most recently a cartoon series, *The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot about That*. We're using that for my message title today. My Scripture text is Psalm 103:12, "As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us."

It's a rainy day, and the two kids are stuck in the house, and their parents are gone. *They're bored, they're blue. They want something new.* (Sorry!)

PP#5: *Image of the Cat in the Hat coming in the door.*

In bursts the strange and exciting character, the Cat in the Hat!

He tells them he'll help them have fun on such a rainy day, and he proceeds to balance all kind of things from around the house, all while he's standing on a ball. Now the fish is the voice of the good conscious. He says this is not a good idea, and that they should ask the cat to leave. Well, as you heard, instead he only adds more and more things, until all of a sudden everything comes crashing down! What a mess! All he wanted was to have fun, but it made such a disaster!

PP#6: The Cat In the Hat Knows a Lot about That

1. Keep trying, and trying, and trying some more!

2. Living selfishly, even for innocent fun, brings great messes

"There is a way that may at first seem right, but in the end, it leads to death." -Proverbs 14:12

One of the reasons this story is so captivating is because we begin to realize that there's a Cat in the Hat in all of us! We just want to have some fun, innocent fun. What's the harm in that? Well, there's no harm in silly fun, but as the story proceeds, something starts to feel wrong. I mean, the Cat in the Hat doesn't quit. He goes on and on, not heeding the voice of reason. And we sense that in our lives, too. I mean, we live our lives, and we pursue what seems good, and fun, and feels right, and seems innocent enough. But then, after a while, something begins to seem wrong. Living the way that seems right to us, what we may want in the moment, what we tell ourselves, "What's the harm in that?" begins to look more and more out of control. This is often the way high school drinking goes, or drugs, or flirting. It happens slowly, so innocently. But before you know it, a mess! Our relationships are broken, our finances stuck. Our character is marred, and others see us in ways we don't want them to. We didn't mean for this to happen. How did it get to this?

The Cat in the Hat seems innocent. And there's nothing wrong with fun. I mean, look at us here today! We're all kinds of silly in worship this morning! Fun *can* be innocent. But when we read the story more closely, we see that the Cat was actually acting quite selfishly, claiming to want to help the kids to have fun, but actually he behaved with little regard for others, for his surroundings, or for the voice of warning that was crying out.

Most of our messes come this way. It's not that we mean for them to happen. We don't intend to hurt that someone, or cause that heartache. But when we live so carefree, pursuing the fun in a kind of blind and selfish way, there is collateral damage. And we're often the last to see it!

Proverbs 14:12 says so honestly, “There is a way that may at first seem right to us, but in the end, it leads to death.” It may seem OK, but it’s not necessarily the way God says is best for us.

Reflect on your life. How have you let your Cat in the Hat run too free? How have you, by not being careful or attentive or just by being innocently selfish, brought on messes and hurt and pain? Our inner lives can be like this, too. God has a plan for our lives that brings abundant living and meaning and purpose to us. But when we try to live our own way, in a way that seems right to us, we begin to have that nagging feeling that disaster is looming. Our lives end up in a mess, and we can’t seem to get it cleaned up by ourselves. The Bible calls this being stuck in our sin. And we cannot fix it ourselves.

Well, the fish sputters for him to stop and get things cleaned up, but no one is listening. Instead, the Cat in the Hat invites two friends to come out. Who are they?

PP#7: *Image of Thing 1 and Thing 2.*

That’s right! Thing 1 and Thing 2! But rather than helping, they run through the house getting into even more mischief, and make things worse! Now the children are really starting to get worried, and don’t know what to do. It’s out of control! Then the fish shrieks that he sees their mother coming down the sidewalk. Now they’re in trouble. Everything’s a mess, and there’s nothing they can do about it!

PP#8: The Cat In the Hat Knows a Lot about That

1. Keep trying, and trying, and trying some more!

2. Living selfishly, even for innocent fun, brings great messes

3. Choose your friends by how they influence you

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’” -1 Corinthians 15:33

“The one who walks with the wise will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” -Proverbs 13:20

Again, this silly story strikes right to our lives. How do the people you invite into your life, the ones you let into your inner circle, affect you? Do they encourage you to live well, or do they encourage you to live carelessly? Do they feed into you letting let your Cat in the Hat go unrestrained? Or do they encourage you to listen to your inner voice, the soft voice of God speaking to your heart.

This summer on the Wildfire mission trip we heard testimonies from recovering addicts. Over and over again they said that in order to change their patterns of behavior, they had to loose their old friends and get new ones. Their old friends pulled them back into unhelpful behaviors. New ones helped them stay strong and clean.

It’s true for all of us! Paul says, “Don’t be deceived. Bad company corrupts good morals!” How true! And Proverbs 13:20, “The one who walks with the wise will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.” Living as God’s kids means choosing carefully who we let influence us. We can reach out to those who are hurting, and we need to come along side those who are making bad choices, yes. But we also need to keep even closer, people who will be our accountability partners, and encourage us on the good path.

After worship, in the lobby, sign up for a small group. That group can help you stay on God’s path. We all need that support. Don’t try to go without it. The wrong is oh so strong!

PP#9: *Image of Cat in the Hat's cleanup machine.*

Well, the story has a happy ending! The Cat in the Hat drives in a cleanup machine that miraculously puts everything back, perfectly in order. You know, this is one of the two images from my childhood I think about regularly. The other is Magic Micky Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice. How wonderful it would be if such a machine actually existed! Do you ever wish that? Or if there were a spell we could say that would magically do the chores? You'd be surprised how often I think how wonderful it would be if the Cat in the Hat suddenly came through the door on that wonderful machine!

PP#10: The Cat In the Hat Knows a Lot about That

1. Keep trying, and trying, and trying some more!
2. Living selfishly, even for innocent fun, brings great messes
3. Choose your friends by how they influence you
4. Let Jesus clean you from the inside out

"As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us." Psalm 103:12

But even though I have to do the chores myself—at least the ones I can't make the kids do!—I have really good news for you today. Such a wonderful machine really exists for our spiritual lives. It is the cleaning machine of God's salvation.

You see, our Cat in the Hat can become best friends with Jesus, who cleans up our spiritual house, our inner life, so that it is perfectly clean when our motherly God walks in our door.

PP#11: Isaiah 1:16-18

16 Wash! Be clean! Remove your ugly deeds from my sight. Put an end to such evil; 17 learn to do good. Seek justice: help the oppressed; defend the orphan; plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let's settle this, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow. If they are red as crimson, they will become like wool.

God says through the prophet Isaiah, "Wash! Be clean! Remove your ugly deeds from my sight. Put an end to such evil; learn to do good. Seek justice: help the oppressed; defend the orphan; plead for the widow." See? Live a different life, a *clean* life. How? Do we do this on our own? No, we cannot. So here's the good news, God invites us to come *to Him* for this. He will do it for us! He says, verse 18, "Come now, and let's settle this, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow. If they are red as crimson, they will become like wool."

That's a miraculous clean! It comes only from God! Jesus died on the cross to take our sins away. We sang about this earlier, "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus!" When we invite Jesus into our life, He brings in the cleaning machine! Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us." That's clean! When God cleans away our sin, it is taken to the cross of Jesus, and it is gone. "Jesus Paid It All." We get a new start! Do you hear this good news? This is for you, for your life! Your Cat in the Hat knows a lot about that!

PP#12: Psalm 103

1 Let my whole being bless the Lord! Let everything inside me bless His holy name! 2 Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all His good deeds: 3 how God forgives all your sins, heals all your sickness, 4 saves your life from the pit, crowns you with faithful love

and compassion, 5 and satisfies you with plenty of good things so that your youth is made fresh like an eagle's....

How? How do you open the door for God's cleaning? Let's go back to Psalm 103. It comes in your relationship to God. It comes when we give our lives to God, and choose to follow Jesus, and the way Jesus leads, letting Jesus be Lord of our everyday lives. Verse 1 says, "Let my whole being bless the Lord! Let everything inside me bless His holy name!" This is loving God with everything you are! It's giving Him your whole self! Verse 2, "Let my whole being bless the Lord and never forget all His good deeds: how God forgives all your sins, heals all your sickness, saves your life from the pit, crowns you with faithful love and compassion, and satisfies you with plenty of good things so that your youth is made fresh like an eagle's...." A new start!

PP#13: Psalm 103

8 The Lord is compassionate and merciful, very patient, and full of faithful love.... 10 He doesn't deal with us according to our sin or repay us according to our wrongdoing, 11 because as high as heaven is above the earth, that's how large God's faithful love is for those who honor Him. 12 As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us. 13 Like a parent feels compassion for their children—that's how the Lord feels compassion for those who honor Him.

Verse 8, "The Lord is compassionate and merciful, very patient, and full of faithful love.... He doesn't deal with us according to our sin or repay us according to our wrongdoing, because as high as heaven is above the earth, that's how large God's faithful love is for those who honor Him. As far as east is from west—that's how far God has removed our sin from us. Like a parent feels compassion for their children—that's how the Lord feels compassion for those who honor Him."

"Like a parent...." God is our parent! We are His kids. Living Seussically as God's kids means letting Him run His saving healing through our lives. We can have a happy story, like how the Cat in the Hat story ends!

It comes by inviting Jesus into your heart. You can do it today. All you need to do is offer God your botched life. Tell Him you're life's a mess. Ask Him to clean it. Ask Jesus to come into your life and work His miracle. And then, follow Jesus in a new way of life.

If you want to do that, you can simply do it in the quiet of your own heart. If you want make that commitment boldly, you can come up to the front pew at the close of worship, and someone from the prayer team will pray with you.

PP#14: It's a Seussical Life: Living as God's Kids

Living as God's kids, we've learned today, means letting Jesus clean you from the inside out. It means following Him every day. It means you keep on trying to do what is right and good, even when things don't work out. Tenacious Christians: keep trying and trying and trying some more! God is toning you, making you strong. Living as God's kids means identifying the irresponsible ways your Cat in the Hat tempts you to live selfishly, carelessly, and letting Jesus transform that part of you to wanting to live God's way. And living as God's kids mean choosing carefully who you let influence and shape you.

PP#15: *Grow image from church website.*

I want to close with a bit more on this. Like I said, we need to be involved in groups that surround us with good input. As you leave today, I invite you to check out the opportunities that are available through Forest Hills. When the service is over, and after I say the final blessing, we're going to have the kids stay in the sanctuary for a short Cat in the Hat video. Adults, we're invited to browse through the lobby. There are tables with information and sign-ups for everyone. There's a table of options for kids, like Kid's Church, and Awana. Andrew and Jason will be at that table. There's a table for youth, with Scott and Bob there to share about options for youth. And then there's a table for adults, with information on all kinds of groups: fellowship groups, service groups, studies, life groups, the works. Be sure to swing by and get some information, and even sign up. We're starting a number of new groups this week.

PP#16: *Image of green eggs and ham, and Yink's pink ink drink.*

And then, of course, we have green eggs and ham for lunch. Everyone is invited to stay for such an eye-catching lunch, served with Yink's Pink Ink Drink. That's in the fellowship hall. And then, there's 9-square in the front yard, and play time on the play equipment across the parking lot.

So...the party begins, there's much fun to be had. You're about to find out that green eggs are not bad!

Amen.

Closing Song: "You Are Good"

Benediction: Pastor David

Remind people to stay for prayer.

Also kids stay in for the video.

After Worship:

Prayer Time: Front pew with members of the Prayer Team

Movie: "Cat in the Hat"

Sign up for Grow Groups in the Lobby

Meal: Green Eggs and Ham, Yink's Pink Ink Drink

4 Square and outdoor games